# CHAPTER II

## THE QUESTION OF THE SOUTHERN FORTS.

THE positions of the parties to the controversy being, as we have seen, thus diametrically opposed, a collision was almost certain, sooner or later, to occur. The control of the Southern forts was naturally the first question demanding settlement. Let us look at it from the standpoint occupied by each of the parties.

The States which seceded held, it must be remembered, the theory that the United States was not a single nation, but a collection of nations, which had for many years acted for certain purposes through an agency known as the Government of the United States. To this Government tracts of land had been ceded by the different States, that on them might be erected light-houses, forts, arsenals, court-houses, post-offices, and the like, all subserving the general welfare, and particularly that of the State making the cession. These buildings had all been erected at the public expense, and by the General Government. The munitions of war, the money, the public property, contained in them belonged to the General Government as the agent of all the States united. They were, so to speak, partnership prop-